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## COMMENTS ON SOVIET ELECTORAL SPEECHES

As in the past, the recent election speeches by the top Soviet leaders were for the most part devoted to well-worn propaganda themes intended primarily for Orbit consumption. No new policy formulations or policy changes were evidenced.

As to the internal political scene, the benefits derived from collective leadership were proclaimed by all. Malenkov was perhaps the most pointed in praise of collectivity when he stated that, "there is no doubt that collective leadership of the party and the country constitutes an essential guarantee of a correct and successful solution of the vital tasks confronting us." Bulganin claimed that "our strength lies in the collective wisdom of the party and government." The others affirmed the principle in lesser degrees. In line with this policy, Stalin was treated to the same general deemphasis as was noted on the anniversary of his death.

In the realm of speculation, it is curious that Malenkov, in enumerating the main points of the new economic program, refrained entirely from mentioning the work of either the September or February plenums of the Central Committee in formulating the policy. This contrasted noticeably with the frequent references to the Central Committee made by Molotov, Khrushchev and Bulganin and may well reflect Malenkov's primary responsibility as Chairman of the Council of Ministers and attending preoccupation with matters immediately associated with the government. On the other hand, it recalled similar treatment accorded Malenkov's August speech by Khrushchev in his report to the September plenum of the Central Committee.

Also dissimilar to the speeches of Molotov, Khrushchev, and Bulganin was the fact that Malenkov failed to pay tribute to the tricentenary of the Ukraine's reunion with Russia, an anniversary being widely celebrated throughout the Soviet Union at this time. During the past few months, some mention of Russian-Ukrainian friendship has been almost mandatory in propaganda speeches of this type.

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A hint that the leadership may be about to tackle the particularly distressing housing shortage may also be gleaned from the speeches. The unanimity with which the subject was attacked suggests that a full campaign against this long neglected sector may now be forthcoming.

When addressing themselves to other economic matters, the campaign orators gave routine treatment to the achievements and objectives of the Soviet economy but failed to provide any fresh information on the current economic program.

In contrast to the other speeches, however, Malenkov's statement devoted little attention to the agricultural problem and made only passing reference to the new land reclamation scheme. Malenkov instead emphasized the necessity to improve labor productivity, stating that this problem "should become the central concern of leadership." Although he avoided mentioning the 1953 plan results which revealed a sharp decline in labor productivity, his remarks reflect concern over this situation.

While all in the top hierarchy are apparently agreed on the urgency of improving the economy's productive performance, they may well part company on the methods for achieving this objective. The differences in emphasis in the election speeches contain the hint that Malenkov is not disposed to view the approach to the economic problem in the same light as a majority of his colleagues. His sympathies appear to be inclined toward reliance on productivity increases as the remedy. Shying away from short-run gambles, he may prefer a more cautious long-run approach based on measures designed to stimulate efficiency in industry and to expand yields in agriculture. In such an assessment of the situation, the appropriate course of action would focus on an expansion of capital investment in light industry and in established agricultural enterprises, on improvement of technical skills and worker incentives, and upon administrative streamlining. Most of the innovations in economic practice introduced last autumn were consistent with this pattern.

But there are apparently those of different persuasion. More impatient, they have called for bolder steps offering the possibility of more immediate, but less certain, returns. This type of approach apparently underlies the Central Committee's latest decree, which according to Pervukhin was based on "the remarkable report of Comrade Khrushchev." In calling for the reclamation of more than 30,000,000 acres of marginal land in the next two years, the implementation of this decree will

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require a sizeable drain on the earmarked expansion of other sectors of agriculture. Even with a heavy investment of resources, the limitations of soil and climate in the new areas make them unsuitable for permanent cultivation. Malenkov's slight attention to this matter in favor of emphasis upon productivity aspects of economic improvement suggests that he shares neither the enthusiasm nor the responsibility for this decision.

Neither Premier Malenkov nor Foreign Minister Molotov made any startling departures from previous statements of Soviet foreign policy.

The most significant part of Malenkov's remarks was his reactivation of the slogan he launched a year ago concerning the possibility of settling all controversial questions by peaceful means. His return to this theme was probably designed to build up Western sentiment for making concessions to the USSR. His brief references to the Berlin and Geneva conferences were designed only to demonstrate the importance Moscow attaches to a return to the method of great power conferences as the best means of settling controversial problems. Similarly, Molotov emphasized the importance of the Berlin meeting in that it marked a break in the long interval between conferences of great powers.

Malenkov accompanied his optimistic statement on the possibility of settling outstanding issues with support for the principle of "peaceful economic competition of the Soviet Union with all capitalist countries, including of course the United States."

Malenkov and Molotov both gave particular emphasis to the Soviet plan for a European security treaty, adding weight to the belief that this will continue as a major propaganda theme. Molotov emphasized that the plan was open to revision. Noting the criticism of the exclusion of the United States from the proposed pact, he said that at Berlin "no one denied that corresponding amendments to the draft could be examined." This vague hint shows a new Soviet awareness that its security plan was critically weakened in European eyes by the provision to ostracize the United States.

Molotov made standard references to the danger of German militarism and Hitlerite generals, while Malenkov cited France and Italy as two of the countries particularly threatened by this danger, if Europe remained divided.

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Neither speaker gave any preview of Soviet strategy for Geneva, but both emphasized the importance of China's participation as an equal. Molotov said that this made more urgent the restoration of China's rights in the UN.

In his comments on the "consolidation of peace" in Asia, Malenkov made special mention of the "valuable contribution of the great Indian people," citing Nehru's 1 March speech on the grant of American military aid to Pakistan. Nehru's rejection of America's "intention to establish United States rule in Asia for an indefinite period," according to Malenkov, reflects the determination of Asian peoples not "to allow anybody to push them backwards." This is reminiscent of Pravda's condemnation of American attempts to turn "steadily developing events backwards" in its reply to President Eisenhower's 16 April speech.

Malenkov expressed satisfaction that London is beginning to admit the importance of trade with the Soviet Union, the first major comment apparently referring to Prime Minister Churchill's recent speech in favor of increased trade. Molotov repeated a familiar attack on the continuation of "previous curtailments and senseless discrimination" against the Orbit in international trade. Neither speaker made any significant effort to exploit the divisive possibilities of new trade proposals.

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